

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 AID-05 OMB-01 ACDA-05

NEAE-00 /098 W

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P 231347Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7482

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

S E C R E T RABAT 0375

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MO, SS, SP

SUBJECT: SAHARA ROUNDUP

1 SUMMARY. AS POLISARIO ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO INFLICT LOSSES ON GOM UNITS, FAR SWEEP OF HITHERTO UNTOUCHED AREAS OF SAHARA AND OF OTHER AREAS OF SOUTHERN MOROCCO AND NORTHERN MAURITANIA REPORTEDLY ABOUT TO BEGIN. NO EVIDENCE HERE THAT GOM USING NAPALM OR THAT IT HAS ANY IN STOCK. USG HAS NEVER SUPPLIED NAPALM HERE. LARAKI PUBLICLY ACCUSES LIBYA OF TRANSFERRING ARMS TO ALGERIA. SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL CALLS MOROCCAN SAHARA

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TAKEOVER FAIT ACCOMPLI AND EXPRESSES VIEW THAT TWO SIDES WILL

REACH COMPROMISE. END SUMMARY

2. GOM REPORTEDLY PLANNING NEW SWEEPS IN SAHARA AND SOUTHERN MOROCCO. WE HAVE A GROWING NUMBER OF INDICATIONS THAT GOM IS ABOUT TO LAUNCH SWEEP OPERATIONS INTO AREAS OF SAHARA HITHERTO LEFT TO F POLISARIO CONTROL. SPECIFICS OF GOM PLANNING UNCLEAR AS TO SENSITIVE MAHBES AREA BUT GOM WILL REPORTEDLY SWEEP EASTWARD IN OTHER REGIONS OF SAHARA, INCLUDING SOME PARTS OF MAURITANIA (REPORTEDLY AT GIRM REQUEST) IN SEARCH OF POLISARIO. INTENSIVE SWEEPS ALSO PLANNED FOR SOUTHERN PART OF MOROCCO, WHERE TERRORISM AND INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN ON UPSWING. MISSION OFFICER WHO RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO AREA REPORTED SOME ANXIETY AMONG BOTH LOCAL OFFICIALS AND POPULACE OVER SECURITY IN AREA.

3. ALLEGED GOM USE OF NAPALM. GOM HAS A NUMBER OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT IN SOUTH, INCLUDING SOME F-5S RECENTLY MOVED TO EL AYOUN. F-5S ARE CONFIGURED ONLY WITH MACHINE GUNS, AIR TO AIR SIDEWINDERS, AND 2.75 INCH ROCKETS, ALTHOUGH THEY COULD CONCEIVABLY CARRY AND DELIVER NAPALM (ALGIERS 0134, 0143). WE KNOW OF NO BOMBS IN MOROCCAN INVENTORY COMPATIBLE WITH F-5S, AFCFVLUCD LQFCQE#HAS OTHER PLANES CAPABLE OF BOMBING MISSIONS. WE HAVE NO RECORD THAT USG HAS EVER PROVIDED NAPALM THROUGH OFFICIAL OR COMMERCIAL CHANNELS. POSSIBILITY OF PURCHASE FROM THIRD COUNTRY, HOWEVER, CANNOT BE RULED OUT ALTHOUGH WE UNAWARE THAT THIS ITEM IN MOROCCAN INVENTORY. MOROCCAN AIR FORCE IS ALREADY INVOLVED IN SOME ACTION IN SAHARA AND RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE THAT AN F-5 WAS DOWNED IN SOUTH JANUARY 21, REPORTEDLY BY GROUND TO AIR MISSILE. A C-130 ALSO DAMAGED BY SIMILAR MISSILE.

4. MOROCCAN REPORTED CLAIMING ALGERIAN POWS. SEMI-OFFICIAL LE MATIN JAN. 23 CARRIED UPI STORY ATTRIBUTED TO "OFFICIAL MOROCCAN SOURCES" WHICH CLAIMED THAT GOM HOLDING THREE "ALGERIAN SOLDIERS" CAPTURED NEAR DAKHLA. ARTICLE GIVES NAMES OF SOLDIERS, AND SAYS THEY WERE LEADING A POLISARIO UNIT.

5. FONMIN LARAKI ACCUSES LIBYANS, WARNS ALGERIA. IN AL AHAMAM INTERVIEW GIVEN JANUARY 19 IN CAIRO, FONMIN LARAKI ACCUSED LIBYA OF TRANSFERRING ARMS TO ALGERIA. LARAKI REFUSED TO IDENTIFY SOURCE OF ARMS OR DETAILS OF HESSI MESSAOUD AGREEMENT OUT OF DESIRE HE

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SAID TO AVOID AGGRAVATING ISSUE. HE ACCUSED ALGERIA OF ATTEMPTING TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" DISPUTE AND TERMED IT "REGRETTABLE" THAT "BROTHER COUNTRY" CALLING IN "FOREIGN GUERRILLA EXPERTS." HE SAID RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA PASSING THROUGH "DELICATE PHASE" AND PROMISED MOROCCO WOULD NEVER BE FIRST TO TAKE RECOURSE TO ARMS. AT SAME TIME IT WOULD "FIRMLY REPEL" ANY AGGRESSION. LARAKI ALSO SAID EXPULSIONS OF MOROCCANS FROM ALGERIA CONTINUING AT RATE OF 2,000 A DAY AFTER 40,000 ALREADY EXPELLED. HE ADDED THAT MOROCCO

CONCERNED AT FATE OF 300,000 REMAINING IN ALGERIA.

6. ALGERIAN DENIES EXPULSIONS RESUMED. ALGERIAN EMBOFF IN JAN. 20 CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF CATEGORICALLY DENIED EXPULSIONS HAD RESUMED. HE ALSO SAID THAT ALTHOUGH ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR HAD NOT RETURNED HE WOULD BE COMING BACK IN A "FEW DAYS."

7. SOVIET OFFICIAL DISCUSSES MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN DISPUTE. IN JAN. 20 CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, SOVIET EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY OPINED THAT MOROCCAN TAKEOVER OF SAHARA WAS FAIT ACCOMPLI WHICH ALGERIANS WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT. HE SAID PROBLEM WAS IN FINDING WAY FOR ALGERIANS TO SAVE FACE AND EXPRESSED GUARDED OPTIMISM THAT COMPROMISE SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND INVOLVING, HE SPECULATED, "THIS OR THAT" CONCESSION ON PART OF GOM. SOVIET RULED OUT LIKELIHOOD OF ALGERIANS INITIATING HOSTILITIES, SAYING SUCH A MOVE WOULD BE "VERY DIFFICULT" MILITARILY AND ALSO BECAUSE "OTHERS ARE STANDING BEHIND MOROCCO." LATER IN CONVERSATION HE SUGGESTED THAT US WAS IN THIS CATEGORY. EMBOFF RETORTED THAT US, AS WAS CASE ON QUESTION OF SAHARA DISPUTE ITSELF, CONTINUED TO REMAIN NEUTRAL IN CURRENT MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN SQUABBLE. EMBOFF SAID THAT WE VALUED OUR RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA AND HE CITED EXISTING COMMERCIAL TIES AS SIGN OF OUR INTEREST IN CONTINUING TO DO SO.

8. DID OSMAN MEET JALLUD? SPANISH EMBASSY SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF JAN 22 THAT PRIMMIN OSMAN WAS TO HAVE MET LIBYAN PRIMIN JALLUD IN COURSE OF OSMAN'S TWO-DAY VISIT TO MALTA. SOURCE COULD NOT CONFIRM THAT MEETING ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE, HOWEVER, AND GOM PRESS HAS MADE NO MENTION OF ANY SUCH MEETING.

9. COMMENT. MOROCCAN SWEEP, ESPECIALLY IF IT INCLUDES MAHBES, WILL ENTAIL RISK OF ALGERIAN REACTION. ON OTHER HAND, GOM UNDOUBTEDLY FEELS IT CANNOT CONTINUE TO PERMIT HARASSMENT OF AND CASUALTIES TO ITS UNITS FROM GUERRILLAS OPERATING IN AREAS WHICH
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GOM IS SUPPOSED TO CONTROL. MOROCCAN ARMY MORALE COULD BECOME AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION WITH CASUALTIES CONTINUING TO MOUNT FROM GUERRILLA HARASSMENT.
NEUMANN

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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